

# ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS OF NIE 11-18-87

FROM:

Robert Blackwell  
NIO/USSR  
7E62 - OHB

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

8 February 1989

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TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

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COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

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NIC-00142/89  
9 February 1989

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Senior Review Panel

VIA: Fritz Ermarth  
Chairman, National Intelligence CouncilFROM: Robert E. Blackwell  
National Intelligence Officer for USSR

SUBJECT: Memorandum To Holders of NIE 11-18-87

1. Attached for your review is a draft of the Concept Paper and Terms of Reference for a Memorandum to Holders of NIE 11-18-87, "Whither Gorbachev: Soviet Policy and Politics in the 1990s." The Memorandum will be prepared under my auspices and drafted by [ ] of the Office of Soviet Analysis in CIA.

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2. I believe this memorandum is made necessary by the rapid pace of political developments in the USSR since the Estimate. Gorbachev has pushed for more radical reforms than we thought likely at this stage in his tenure and those reforms have, in turn, produced more internal turmoil than we expected.

3. The Memorandum to Holders will not attempt to reexamine comprehensively every issue explored by the original Estimate. It will focus on our view of Gorbachev's political strengths and weaknesses, his domestic agenda for the next 3-4 years, his prospects for success in carrying it out, and the implications of that forecast for U.S. policy.

4. I look forward to your comments at your earliest convenience.

*Robert Blackwell*  
Robert Blackwell

Attachment:  
As stated

NIO/USSR/RBlackwell:aw/[ ] (9 Feb. 89)

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## MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS OF NIE 11-18-87

## WHITHER GORBACHEV: SOVIET POLICY AND POLITICS IN THE 1990S

## CONCEPT PAPER

NIE 11-18-87, "Whither Gorbachev: Soviet Policy and Politics in the 1990s", was the Intelligence Community's first overall assessment of the reforms Mikhail Gorbachev is attempting to introduce in the Soviet Union and their implications for the United States and the Western Alliance. Since the publication of that Estimate in November 1987, events have moved more rapidly than most Western or Soviet experts anticipated. Gorbachev's consolidation of political power has proceeded at an almost unprecedented pace. His increased political strength has enabled him to push for more radical reforms than we thought likely at this stage in his tenure. And those reforms, in turn, have produced more internal turmoil than was expected at this point. [ ]

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This rapidly changing domestic scene necessitates an update of our assessment of Gorbachev's political position and ability to make meaningful near-term improvements in the Soviet system. Whether he and his system remain on or advance further along the same course will determine how formidable a political and military adversary the Soviet Union will be in the early 1990s and how much political clout he can bring to his negotiations with the new US Administration. [ ]

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Building on the recently completed NIE 11-23-88 (Gorbachev's Economic Progress: The Challenges Ahead), our Memorandum to Holders of NIE 11-18-87 will focus primarily on an examination of Gorbachev's political strengths and weaknesses, his domestic agenda for the next 3-4 years, the prospects for his success in carrying it out, and the implications of that forecast for US policy. [ ]

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Key Questions

1. How is Gorbachev's domestic agenda likely to evolve over the next 3-4 years? Are the policies associated with perestroika likely to become even more radical? Will this be a period of consolidation or new initiatives?
2. What is the nature of the opposition to Gorbachev and his program? How would the opposition's program differ if it came to power?
3. Will Gorbachev have the necessary political support to carry out his agenda? How vulnerable will he be to political challenge?
4. What are the prospects that nationality unrest or other problems could lead to a retrenchment in domestic policy? Will the leadership be able to manage the evident problems associated with reform without killing the patient?
5. What are the implications of this forecast for Gorbachev's international agenda and US policy?

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Outline/Terms of Reference

I. How is Gorbachev's domestic agenda likely to evolve over the next 3-4 years?

-- Will this be a period of consolidation or further reform?

-- What new political or economic reforms might be initiated?

-- Will there be new movement toward legal reform and a law-based society? Are new initiatives likely in the area of human rights?

-- Will the limits of permissible political discussion be further broadened?

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II. Do Gorbachev and the reformers in the leadership have the necessary political support to carry out their agenda?

-- How solid is the support for Gorbachev and his policies in the Politburo?

-- How much support do they have in the party, other key elite groups, and the society at large?

-- What impact will the political reform have on his powers as President?

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-- What is the nature of his opposition, and how would its program differ if it came to power?

-- How vulnerable will he be to political challenge?

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III. What major obstacles does Gorbachev face in attempting to carry out his program?

-- What are the prospects that nationality unrest could lead to a retrenchment in domestic policy?

-- Could glasnost and political reform lead to a more open questioning of one-party rule and threaten the stability of the system?

-- What impact will the growing discontent of Soviet consumers have on economic reform?

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IV. Given this assessment of Gorbachev's political strength and the obstacles he faces, how much progress is he likely to make in carrying out his domestic agenda in the next 3-4 years?

-- Are his efforts likely to result in a rejuvenation of the political system or revival of economic performance, at least in the consumer sector?

-- Can he achieve sufficient improvements in the standard of living in the next 3-4 years to get the Soviet people behind the reform effort?

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- Will disruptions caused by his reforms result in a slower rate of change, the adoption of an even more radical agenda, or a retrenchment to a more centralized, authoritarian system?

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V. What are the implications of this forecast for Gorbachev's international agenda and US policy?

- What impact will the course of reform at home have on Soviet foreign policy?
- Will we continue to see the same vigorous and flexible diplomacy?
- Will Gorbachev be sufficiently strong politically to make major foreign policy initiatives?

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